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TO-DAY ON PLEVNA BATTLE-FIELD

By FELIX J. KOCH

THE somewhat recent death of "The Lady with the Lamp" has sent popular interest back again to the wars of the seventies, down in south Europe, and in that connection particular interest attaches to what is still to be seen at Plevna Battle-field.

Plevna village, to-day, is just about as small as it was at the time of the memorable encounter.

The train deposits you at Plevna Station at 5.07 in the evening. Stations in the Levant are always far from the city proper, in order that rascally soldiers be not thrust on a settlement between times. So you engage a fiacre or hack, and drive across the softly rolling country, peaceful for its grazing herds, to the site of the terrible battle. Somehow you keep thinking of a book you once read anent "Gravelotte Witnessed and Revisited," and again Byron's description of the field of Waterloo goes singing through your head.

Far beyond you see a large new building, the exterior of a white plastering, a hospital or penitentiary, you don't know which. Otherwise there are only the fields round about, rolling away as quiet grass-land. Here and there you make out an occasional old breastwork, this covered with grass. The soft country road serpentine as it will, with thistle, mullein, and dandelion to edge it. There's a water-mill at one point, and ox-carts rest beside it. Then you sink back far into your hack, white-lined as all are, to recall school histories of the battle.

The peasant carts make way for these fiacres, which take stranger and baggage to the hotel at a fixed printed tariff, though one is supposed to give the driver a slight fee in addition. These peasant carts have open sides, the slats there revealing the base, with the straw on which the peasants take seat, as they drive their two oxen. Picturesque fellows these peasants are, wearing round caps of brown, a shirt and trousers to match, and a wide red girdle. Sometimes there are gypsies here on the battle-fields, or you meet a rough man wearing a Bosniac turban and a brown coat trimmed in black, who drives some very white cows. Mighty herds of white oxen at times choke these roads, and then you are at Plevna.

It greets one as a town of red roofs and white-coated, one-story houses. Here and there is a two-story house. That one yonder belongs

to your driver, he of the red shirt and brown trousers. While he tells it, he lashes the horses up, for drivers in Bulgaria continue thrashing their steeds in order to keep them at a gallop.

A *shadoof* or well-sweep in one yard, a bread-seller at the roadside are features of the environs.

In Plevna proper there is the market, the building, as a Rustchuk, of a room each side, and before that a portico, on whose earthen floor the goods are exposed. Round the market there is a broad open place, with bison carts galore. Then come other houses, one story and in long rows, so that the roofs slope as a whole out toward the street. Small houses they are, and just to be seen behind a row of young locusts.

The place reminds one of the poorer quarter of Belgrade, the more for its little stores. These carry a cheap line of wares. They have broad wooden shutters to windows and doors, the door always at the centre front and a dwelling-window at each side. Usually the wares hang down from a bar, out against the sidewalk from the top of the door, or else there is a display of the goods set flat against the wall of the shop, here outside. All stores handling the same sort of wares are grouped together. One notices what quantities of rope are sold.

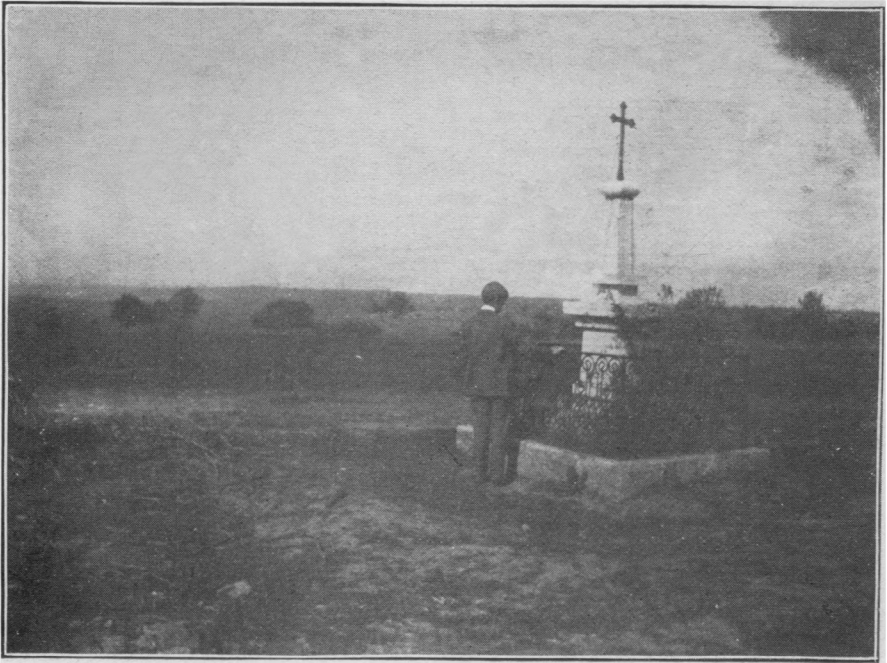
The whole town, before long, resolves itself into one very long main street, with an occasional lane bending off and back to this.

Then you are in the better section of the city. Several houses here are two-story, with a shop in the first. There is no sight-seeing, as such, in the city, and it is a question when Americans were here before. In the one main street the idlers eye us curiously.

Cheaper wares still are here on sale; a peasant woman, her breast decorated with red cording, is pricing these as she walks. Some shops here sell quantities of hand distaffs. Wagons drawn by bison likewise pass to where a circus tent is just put up. You pass the large white marble pedestal with a statue, which serves as a monument to the battle. Near at hand, grouped among the low stores of wood, is the town hall and an old tomb-shaped mosque with dome. Cannon stand out beyond, and then you are at your inn, Hotel Europa.

Here as at all Bulgar hotels, one reaches his room by way of outside steps leading to the second story. There the *hotelier* shows one what chambers he may have. Then, later one comes down by way of an inner stair-way.

There is just one room left this night. This contains three beds.



ON PLEVNA BATTLE-FIELD.



THE TYPE OF WOMAN WHO HELPED THE NURSES AFTER THE BATTLE.



ON THE BATTLE-FIELD



A PLEVNA HOME.

The room has a glass door looking into the apartment of the young daughter of the house, but what of it? They give it to the two men guests anyhow.

The people down here speak Bulgar and a few of them can talk French. The daughter, however, chats in German. They take us to be English, and here, as in Tirnova, they furnish soap (a luxury for a Balkan inn), and there are bedroom slippers as well. Then, where the bed stands against the wall, there is tapestry for paper. Otherwise the wall is bare. The room has a balcony, whence one looks out on the street, and then to an old mosque.

The hotel, however, does not detain one. Instead, you are out on a pedestrian tour of Plevna very shortly. Men, wearing broad red girdles and brown or black caps of wool, are everywhere. One notices their sandals and how the leg is wrapped about with string, covered with beading. You remark the quantities of flies hereabouts, and you fall to discussing how the room at the inn comes to but forty cents for the two of you,—twenty cents apiece that is,—for the best hotel in the town. Then you glance into the shops, and note how many pistols are sold here, and also how the large, translucent lumps of rock-salt are vended for cattle. Barbers hang out a tin plate with a notch in the edge, to fit the chin,—as sign. Next door, school books are sold,—those of paper covers,—and souvenir post-cards are a side line. Fancy cards alone are in the stock of trade, since there is no call for views of the city, owing to there being no touristry and local folk preferring the colored cards.

There is a splendid memorial chapel being built by Russia here to the memory of her victims in the battle. This is much like some large Greek church of marble, but without doors or windows except on the front or the east side. It is an odd structure indeed, and will be the finest thing in the town.

Just across there is a low creek, and beyond that, the shrubs run rampant. A large, two-story public building confronts there, as well.

In the stores, between, American lead-pencils are sold. Shop-keepers stand outside watching a steam-roller smoothing the entire main street. On beyond are the gardens,—neat little places, surrounded by walls hung with quinces.

It is a primitive place, this Plevna. Change has scarce yet come to the town. Outside are the pastures of the battle-fields, with monuments here and there. And they, too, remain much as they were at the time of the battle.